

GOD'S LOVE.

By Rev. E. C. Caldwell, D. D.

Undoubtedly John 3:16 is the heart of John 3:1-21. It is also the heart of the whole Bible. God's love for lost sinners is the heavenly music running all through the Bible from the first great promise of love in Gen. 3:15 to the last great invitation of love in Rev. 22:17, where it "echoes loudest to linger longest in the memory." So the Sunday-school Committee has done well to make this verse the golden text for the lesson on John 3:1-21. It flashes with the shining gold of God's marvelous love. Let us notice some great truths this text teaches us about God's love.

1. The Freeness of God's Love.

"God so loved that He gave." The coming of the Saviour was the result of God's love for lost sinners. He loved, and as a consequence of that love He gave His only begotten Son. Christ is the gift of God's love. He is so represented throughout the Bible. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). God was not a being who hated men and had to be made to love them by the cries and sufferings and blood of His Son. He loved men before Christ came and suffered. It was His love that sent the Saviour from heaven to seek and save the lost.

"Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
The love of God for me;
It sent the Saviour from above,
To die on Calvary."

2. The Holiness of God's Love.

God's love is a holy and just love. We have much preaching today about God's love, but it is largely immoral love that is preached. His love is often represented as a good natured sentiment that overlooks sin without any just and righteous settlement of it. And His justice is often portrayed as a kind of outer garment that God can lay aside when He pleases. And John 3:16 is made to read: "God so loves everybody that everybody will get to heaven and be saved at last." But John 3:16 says nothing of the kind. It clearly implies that if men will not believe, if they will not accept the Saviour God's love has provided, they will perish. "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish." In the Bible's locus classicus on the love of God, in the very heart of the great John 3:16 that throbs with God's love lies imbedded the inevitable, inexorable conclusion that every man who rejects or neglects Christ as his personal Saviour is forever lost. God does not condemn men. God does not damn men. Men condemn and damn themselves by their own wilful rejection of Jesus Christ. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:17-19). We need to think and preach today more on the holiness of God's love. God's love is a love which demands that the question of sin shall be settled in a way satisfactory to His holiness and justice. Such a love, holy and righteous, is clearly taught in John 3:16.

3. The Breadth of God's Love.

It is so broad that it overlaps all barriers and reaches out to all men and to every man. "God so loved that whosoever believeth might have everlasting life." This is not the world of "the elect" or any select

portion of mankind, but the world of lost sinners. "Whosoever" includes you and me and the last man out on the uttermost fringes of this planet. "There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea." Christ tasted death for every man. God's love in Christ has accomplished three wonderful things for every man of all the world.

a. It has removed every barrier that once stood between Himself and lost mankind. Atonement is that work "in which God so deals in Christ with the sin of the world that it is no longer a barrier between Him and mankind." In the closing verse of "Just as I am" we sing a most precious gospel truth when we sing: "Thy love unknown has broken every barrier down." Since Calvary the way to heaven is open to every man. So it comes about that any man anywhere can step towards heaven and know that there are no obstacles in his way outside of his own sinful heart; while at the door of his heart the loving Saviour is knocking for admission.

b. It has provided an atonement sufficient for the sins of every man of all the world. The atonement is no commercial transaction, where by Christ shed so many drops of blood for so many sinners. If only one sinner were saved, no less blood would have flowed from his wounded side; and if every human being were to be saved, no more blood would have been required. His sacrifice is of "noblest name and richest blood" and, therefore, his blood has infinite propitiating power. "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). "His blood shall never lose its power till all the ransomed hosts of God be saved to sin no more."

c. It has sent a Saviour adapted to the needs of every man. Christianity is the only universal religion. Christ alone satisfies the deepest desires of every human heart. Every man of every race and clime and time can say:

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in thee I find."

LIBRARIES.

Sunday-school libraries have rarely ever been appreciated at their proper value. A man in Vancouver, Canada, has shown his estimate of their value in a very practical way. He has notified the session of the church that he will give \$75 a year for this purpose as long as he lives, and that at his death he will leave an endowment to continue the payment of this amount. This will mean that this Sunday-school will have a constant stream of new books flowing into it to be read by teachers and scholars.

A good, well selected library, properly used, will be a great help to any school or church. The books should be chosen by those who know what good books are, and new ones ought to be supplied as often as possible. Let those in authority in church and Sunday-school think about this and see if a fund cannot be provided.

The reward of faith is quietness and confidence.—Dr. David Smith.

No man has a right to be called great at all if his aims are small.—Alexander MacLaren.

If you can keep Christmas for a day, why not always? But you can never keep it alone.—Henry Van

A dreary place would be this earth,
Were there no little people in it;
The song of life would lose its mirth,
Were there no children to begin it.
—Whittier.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES

VISIONS AND TASKS.

M., Jan. 29. Soul-winning. Dan. 12:1-3.
T., Jan. 30. Spreading the Kingdom. 1 Cor. 2:1-9.
W., Jan. 31. More givers. 2 Cor. 9:1-15.
T., Feb. 1. Deeper spiritual life. Eph. 3:13-21.
F., Feb. 2. Cleansing our cities. John 2:13-25.
S., Feb. 3. Working for peace. Matt. 5:9.
S., Feb. 4. Topic—Visions and Tasks. (Christian Endeavor Decision Day.) Joel 2:28, 29; 2 Chron. 34:1-7.
*How can we show our willingness to serve?
How do tasks prepare us for higher tasks?
What claims has Christ upon us?*

There are some people in the world who live down in the hollows where it is dark and damp and contracted, and they see very little of the world at large, and the result is that their lives are narrow and contracted. They get very little pleasure out of their lives and accomplish very little. There are others who climb to the mountain tops and look out over the broad expanse of the world. These see that the world is very large and the more they see of it, the more do their own hearts and minds expand. The Christian who takes a narrow view of life and its responsibilities and who thinks that he has no connection with the world except with his immediate surroundings will prove to be a very poor kind of a Christian. He will get very little enjoyment out of his religion, and it will accomplish very little in the world.

Soul Winning (Dan. 12:1-3): The great work of the Christian is winning souls for Christ. This is the work that is most highly commended in the Scriptures. Daniel says that those who win souls are wise, and because of what they do, they will shine as the stars forever and ever. In 1 Cor. 15:41, the Apostle Paul tells us that there will be a difference in the shining of Christians in the world to come. If we will look up into the heavens on some cloudless night, we will see that there are a few stars which are unusually bright. These the astronomers call the stars of the first magnitude. There are more of the second magnitude, and still more of the third. As the brightness decreases, the number increases, until we come to the great Milky Way, which astronomers tell us is made up of stars whose brightness is so slight as we see them that one cannot be distinguished from another. The brightness in Christians in heaven will not be due to any partiality on the part of God. He gives a crown of life which stands for the salvation which He bestows, but the brightness comes from the work done for God here in this world. It is a very pretty thought which is expressed in one of our hymns which represents each soul won for Christ as being a star in our crown. In showing their love and homage to the Saviour, the redeemed will cast down their crowns before him. Shall we be willing to present to him a starless crown? Or, as another one of our hymns says, will we be willing to go to him empty-handed, having no souls won to present as evidence of our love and labor for him? There is no one who cannot do something in the way of winning souls for Christ. It is only a question whether we will do what we can.

Spreading the Kingdom (1 Cor. 2:1-9): When we start out to work for Christ, and for the upbuilding of his kingdom, let us keep in mind the great thought that what a lost soul needs is Jesus Christ, and what we ought to tell him is that Jesus died that he might live. One reason that so many people fail in the work of winning souls is that they attempt to teach other things that are not essential and try to win men to a particular church or to some particular idea when what is needed is to win them to Christ. Paul with all of his learn-

ing, did not attempt to argue with men about anything except their lost condition, and the fact that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of sinners.

More Givers (2 Cor. 9:1-15): It is remarkable how few people realize that giving money to the service of God is an act of worship. The Bible teaches that this is just as truly worship as the prayer is service. When Christians begin to realize this fact there will be more of real joy and pleasure in giving than they have ever experienced before. A noble Christian man said some time ago, "It is not a question with me of how little I can give to God's service, but now little I can spend on myself, in order that all the rest that I have may be given to Him." Most giving is done without any serious thought and without any consideration of the responsibility of the giver. Every Christian who has any means at all ought to give something. The Jews of old were required to give at least two-tenths of their income besides the free-will offering which they were expected to make from time to time. Whether we adopt the tithe as our plan of giving or not, we ought to be sure that we give systematically and in proportion to our income. Each one must settle the question as to what he will give. It ought to be upon a percentage basis. If Christian people would all adopt the tithe plan and give one-tenth of their income there would never be any difficulty in securing all the money that is needed for the Lord's work. There would never have to be any special appeals or any pitiful statements coming from those engaged in the work telling of how it was hindered for the lack of money.

Deeper Spiritual Life (Eph. 3:13-21): Man often times boasts of his strength, but the fact is that man is weak. Many animals are much stronger physically than man is, but it is in man's spiritual nature that his weakness is especially shown. Many a man feels that he is strong enough to depend upon his own strength for the accomplishment of whatever he has to do. He often times undertakes to meet the temptations of Satan by his own power. The fact is that man can do nothing that is right in a spiritual sphere without the help of God. What he needs is to be strengthened by the spirit of God in the inner man, and to have Christ dwelling in his heart by faith. He only is strong who rests upon God, and upon Him alone for the strength needed in accomplishing the work which he has to do. God never gives any man any work to do for which He does not provide strength; and, if he finds himself too weak to do the work, it is only because he fails to use the strength which God provides. If God has given us any work to do, do not consider your own strength or inability in any way. Simply put yourself into God's hands and go and do the work which He assigned. The carpenter's saw or plane can do no work of itself. It is only as it is used by the carpenter. When Christ told the man with the withered hand to stretch forth his hand, he had no strength to do this; but when he put himself in Christ's power, and tried to do just what Jesus told him to do, he was able to stretch it forth, and in the stretching forth that which was weak and useless became strong and useful, so the life which seems useless to us will become strong and serviceable when put into the hand of Jesus to be used by him. What is necessary is for us to recognize our own weakness and to take the position of the Apostle Paul and say, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

Cleansing Our Cities (John 2:13-25): We cannot agree with the one who